

## Academic Ethics in Turkish Universities: Perceptions of Academicians from Engineering, Medicine and Education Colleges \*

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### Abstract

*Problem Statement:* Academicians such as scientists contribute to the research of knowledge, to the free disclosure of knowledge, to students' training, and to public service with their special knowledge and skills. Academicians' ethical responsibilities and values have a very important place in the development of universities' functions, which, in turn, play a very fundamental role in the development of societies and humanity. Recently, within the scope of ethics, studies have focused on developing professional ethical codes, which have gained increasing attention. Within this frame, the problems of this study involve the opinions of academicians in Turkish state universities in relation to the extent that they adopt ethical responsibilities to their profession, colleagues, students, university and community.

*Purpose of Study:* The aim of this research is to determine the opinions of academicians in Turkish state universities in relation to the extent that they adopt ethical responsibilities to their profession, colleagues, students, university and community, and to what extent their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities.

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*Methods:* This study was designed to be a descriptive survey. The universe of this study consists of 14058 academicians; 387 academicians were included in the research from Engineering, Medicine and Education Colleges. The data were collected with five scales including academic responsibilities. In order to form the scales, a comprehensive review of handbooks published by 50 universities from 13 countries was made.

*Findings and Results:* Academicians adopt the responsibilities to profession, colleagues, students, university and community “completely,” whereas they are of the opinion that their colleagues adopt these rules “to a great extent.” Most adopted and fulfilled responsibilities by faculty are related to “responsibilities to students.” However, they adopt and fulfill their responsibilities towards their profession to a relatively lesser degree. Associate professors are more sensitive to their responsibilities to their professions than assistant and full professors are.

*Conclusions and Recommendations:* With this research, it is concluded that academicians least often adopt and fulfill the responsibility of whistleblowing any unethical practices to the authorities. In preventing unethical behavior, it is necessary to grasp the importance of whistleblowing as a virtuous behavior in academia; it should be encouraged as much as possible. This role will be undertaken by the ethical commissions or university administrations. Perceptions of academicians significantly differ from each other in relation to the “academic discipline and title” variables. Associate professors and academicians from colleges of medicine adopt their academic ethical responsibilities the most. In preventing unethical behaviours within the university, ethics training, professional ethics, science philosophy and research methods should be a part of the curriculum in all graduate programs and disciplines.

*Key Words:* Academic ethics, academic responsibilities, academic code of ethics

In recent years, within the context of the issue of ethics which has become highly popular, studies focusing on the development of ethical codes have been subject to great interest. Almost all professions admit that there is a need for developing ethical codes that will control and guide the behaviors of their members. In general, the existence of ethical codes is considered to be one of the fundamental properties of a profession (Engle & Smith, 1990). Traditional mechanisms cannot provide adequate guidance for academicians to meet the demands of higher education which are becoming increasingly complex and to solve the ethical problems they are confronted with (Fisher, 2003). Therefore, a determination of academic codes of ethics is of great importance in terms of avoiding possible conflicts among academicians and their exhibiting expected behavioral standards (Mason, Bearden & Richardson, 1990).

According to Callahan (1982), codes of ethics have a number of functions such as: (a) stating the ideals of a profession or field, (b) legitimating the profession or field in

the face of skepticism or uncertainty, (c) regulating the practices of its practitioners toward each other, (d) delineating the relationship that should be obtained between a practitioner and the patient or client, (e) seeking to insulate professionals from outside influences and to establish a profitable monopoly on their skills, (f) seeking to define the nature of a profession, (g) establishing some internal rules for regulating the practice of that profession, (h) a response to internal tensions and external pressure.

From this point on, we can conclude that “academic ethics” is an umbrella term that includes the terms: “ethical behavior standards, codes, rights, responsibilities and practice rules in academia.” The academic ethic refers to “the obligations of university teachers both to their own disciplines and institutions and to their surrounding societies” (Shils, 1997). In other words, academic ethic defines the values that should be followed conscientiously based on the social and scientific responsibilities of the shareholders of the academicians team members (Büken, 2006). Academicians’ responsibilities are classified in different ways in the literature. For instance, Engle and Smith (1990) classified the ethical attitudes of the faculty members teaching accounting in the following manner: “research, travel, outside employment, relationships with students and publishers, and use of computer resources;” this classification has been used by different authors carrying out ethical research (e.g. Shenan, 1994; Köklü, 2003).

We address this issue by classifying the ethical responsibilities of academicians based on the analysis of the manuals, handbooks and guides published related to academic ethical responsibilities of academicians by 50 universities in 13 countries.\* While determining these responsibilities, the researchers searched the Web sites of universities for the purpose of obtaining the best possible number of university handbooks and guides with these keywords: “faculty ethics, responsibilities, academic ethical principles, faculty codes of conduct, the ethics of professors, faculty professional ethics.” The main topic of the present study, the academicians’ responsibilities towards their 1) profession 2) colleagues 3) students 4) university and 5) society are explained below.

#### *Academicians’ Responsibilities towards their Profession*

As members of the academic world, academicians should carry out research studies in their fields, improve their academic competencies, behave in a manner

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\* United States of America (*Adelphi, Ball State, California State, California Los Angeles, DePaul, Harvard, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan State, Michigan Tech, Northern Illinois, Northern Iowa, Rowan, Rutgers, Southern California, Texas, Texas Medical Branch, Utah ve Wisconsin-Madison University*), Australia (*Adelaide, Australian Catholic, Canberra, Carnegie Mellon Heinz, Curtin Teknoloji, Dublin, Newcastle, South Australia, The Broken Bay ve Western Australia University*), Georgia (*Telavi State University*), Canada (*Concordia ve Simon Fraser University*), Russia (*Adigey, Moskova Pedagoji ve Volgograd State Technical University*), Turkey (*Anadolu, Ankara, Boğaziçi, Doğu, Doğu Akdeniz, Ege ve Uşak University*), Iceland (*Bifröst, Reykjavik University*), Netherlands (*Leiden University*), New Zealand (*Waikato*), Malesia (*Kuala Lumpur Infrastructure University*), England (*Sussex University*), Philippines (*Ateneo Davao University*), Bosnia Herzegovina (*Banja Luka University*).

compatible with academic honesty and correctness while conducting their works, put forth effort to come up with scientific facts, present scientific facts without distorting them and inform the authorities in case of ethical violations. On the other hand, an academician should stay away from any activity which may pose a threat to his/her academic reliability and independence and may harm the credibility of the profession; an academician should also avoid conflicts of interest.

#### *Academicians' Responsibilities towards their Colleagues*

Academicians should be respectful to the academic freedom of their colleagues, be unbiased while evaluating their colleagues from academic and administrative perspectives, cite the contributions of their colleagues to works performed in cooperation, **make appropriate citations to their colleagues' ideas and findings**, be open to the criticism of their colleagues, help young colleagues to develop themselves, keep their colleagues' **private information secret except for legal cases**, avoid such behaviors as threat, abuse or insult to their colleagues. Moreover, Gao, Siegel, Johar and Sirgy (2008) stated that academicians should pay attention to these items to avoid in their relationships with their colleagues: criticizing their colleagues in front of other academicians, students or administrative personnel, putting pressure on editors to accept their works, or showing favoritism to their friends and other people with whom they have some personal connections when they are working as editors.

#### *Academicians' Responsibilities towards Students*

Academicians should avoid discriminatory behaviors based on religion, language, ethnicity, ideas, gender, sexual tendencies, age, or handicaps against their students. They should also provide a syllabus including the aims and evaluative criteria of the course for students, teach the lessons in line with this syllabus, evaluate **students' works fairly**, **give constructive and timely feedback for the evaluative process**, encourage students to freely express their opinions, arrange the office hours in such a way as to be available for students and announce them in advance, keep **their students' personal information secret**, **avoid behaviors which may somehow be abusive for students**, and be a model for students by exhibiting ethical behaviors.

#### *Academicians' Responsibilities towards the University*

While carrying out the requirements of their responsibilities towards the university, academicians should avoid behaviors that distort the credibility of the university, be willing to accept the duties complying with their qualifications, protect the resources of the university, use those resources effectively and efficiently, inform the university in advance of their intention to quit their position so as not to cause any trouble for the university, avoid declaring their personal opinions as if they were the opinions of the university, and keep away from any activities that contradict their duties and responsibilities at the university.

#### *Academicians' Responsibilities towards Society*

As a member of society, academicians should be sensitive towards societal issues, protect society's interests, separate personal opinions from scientific findings while

addressing society, play an active and effective role in society's economic, cultural and intellectual development, avoid behaviors that may be harmful to the credibility and stability of society, and regard serving society as a societal responsibility. Research related to academic ethics deals with issues such as ethical responsibilities of academicians, principles and standards of academic ethics (e.g. Callahan, 1982; Schurr, 1982; Shenan, 1994; Pinar, 2002; Gbadamosi, 2004; Murray, Gillese, Lennon, Mercer & Robinson, 2006), need for and functions of academic ethics (e.g. Rezaee, Elmore & Szendi, 2001), reflections of ethical principles on academicians' attitudes and behaviors (e.g. McCabe & Butterfield, 2003), academic dishonesty (e.g. Kumar 2008; Simon, Carr, Deflyer, Mccullough, Morgan, Oleson & Ressel, 2001; Kidwell, Wozniak & Laurel, 2003; McCabe, Treviño & Butterfield, 2001; Knight & Auster, 1999), unethical behaviors of academicians based on students' opinions (e.g. Mckay, Kidwell & Kling, 2007; Brimble & Stevenson-Clarke, 2005), non-ethical behaviors of academicians in general (e.g. Mason et al., 1990; Bruhn, Zajac, Al-Kazemi & Prescott, 2002; Macfarlane & Saitoh, 2008; Robie & Kidwell, 2003) and punishment of non-ethical behaviors (e.g. Wenger, Stanley, Korenman, Berk & Liu, 1998).

As Kelley, Bradley and Demott (2005) stated, while there is a great deal of research dealing with ethical codes of students and their effects on students' behaviors, there is a scarcity of research that examines what the ethical responsibilities of academicians should be and the extent to which academicians adopt these responsibilities. It can be argued that national and international studies only reveal the opinions of a limited number of academicians from certain specific fields. These studies focus on which behaviors are viewed as ethical and which are not in the academic world by academicians and where the violation of academic ethics is mostly observed.

Furthermore, in local and foreign literature, there is no classification or evidence regarding academicians' responsibilities to profession, colleagues, students, university and community. Thus, the primary purposes of this study are to (1) determine the responsibilities of academicians in terms of the aforementioned dimensions; (2) determine to what extent academicians adopt the ethical responsibilities to their profession, colleagues, students, university and community; (3) determine to what extent their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities.

The present study looks at the extent to which academic ethical responsibilities are adopted by academicians and their opinions about to what extent their colleagues fulfill them in relation to some variables which are academic title, gender and academic discipline. Moreover, it presents the opinions of academicians from the medical sciences, natural sciences and social sciences about academic ethical responsibilities in the form of interdisciplinary comparison, which is believed to make an important contribution to the literature. The findings of the study can be generalized to all of the academicians working at the medical, engineering and education colleges in Turkey. The present study is also expected to raise awareness on what the academic responsibilities of academicians should be at universities, generate more sensitivity to adherence to academic responsibilities and develop academic ethical culture at institutions of higher education.

## Method

### *Research Design*

This study was designed to be a descriptive survey which offers a snapshot of a current situation or condition of Turkish academicians' opinions about the academic ethical responsibilities of faculty.

### *Sample*

The universe of this study consists of 14058 academicians, which can be represented by 381 academicians with  $\alpha = .05$  significance and 5% tolerance level (Anderson 1990; Cited in Balci, 2010, 102). In line with the purpose of this study, academicians from each of 12 regions, 12 universities, 36 colleges and three titles were randomly selected. Sixty-one percent of the participants are from the colleges of medicine, 23.5% of them are from the colleges of engineering and 15.5% of them are from the colleges of education. Forty-one percent of the academicians are professors, 20.7% of them are associate professors and 37.5% of them are assistant professors. Sixty-nine percent of them are male and 31% are female.

### *Research Instruments*

The data were collected with five scales including academic responsibilities. In order to form the scales, a comprehensive review of the works published by 50 universities from 13 countries was performed.

### *Validity and Reliability*

At the end of this review, an item pool from the detected academic responsibilities of ethics was formed and five scale drafts related to the academic responsibilities of ethics were developed. A pilot study was conducted with 100 academicians not included in the sampling. The reliability coefficients of the scales are as follows:  $\alpha = .71, .86, .88, .80$ , and  $.81$ .

### *Procedure*

Participants responded to each item on the five-point Likert scale. In the column of academicians' adoption of academic ethical responsibilities, the scoring is from "Never Adopt (1)" to "Completely Adopt (5)." In the evaluation of arithmetic means, these intervals were used: "1.00-1.79," never adopt/never fulfill; "1.80-2.59," little adopt/little fulfill; "2.60-3.39," moderately adopt/moderately fulfill; "3.40-4.19," adopt a great extent/fulfill to a great extent;" and "4.20-5.00," completely adopt/completely fulfill.

### *Data Analyses*

Data analysis was achieved by means of the descriptive statistical techniques such as percentage, frequency and arithmetical. In order to find out whether academicians' perceptions related to academic responsibilities were significantly different in terms of their gender, a t-test was used; in addition, title and academic discipline variables were tested with One-Way Anova.

## Results

### *Findings Related to Academicians' Responsibilities towards their "Profession"*

While academicians adopt all of the responsibilities in the dimensions of "responsibilities towards profession" completely ( $\bar{X} = 4,28$ ), their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities to a great extent ( $\bar{X} = 3,72$ ). Academicians most often adopt "continuously improving their academic competencies" ( $\bar{X} = 4,71$ ) and "being fair and just in their academic works" ( $\bar{X} = 4,70$ ). The least adopted two responsibilities are "staying away from activities which may disrupt their academic correctness and impartiality" ( $\bar{X} = 3,93$ ) and "informing authorities in case of ethical violations" ( $\bar{X} = 3,66$ ). Two responsibilities thought to be fulfilled most by colleagues are "presenting scientific facts without distorting" ( $\bar{X} = 4,29$ ) and "being fair and just in their academic works" ( $\bar{X} = 4,17$ ). Two responsibilities thought to be fulfilled least by colleagues are "staying away from activities which may disrupt their academic correctness and impartiality" ( $\bar{X} = 3,17$ ) and "informing authorities in case of ethical violation" ( $\bar{X} = 3,66$ ).

### *Findings Related to Gender, Title and Academic Discipline Variables regarding "Ethical Responsibilities towards Profession"*

*Gender.* There is no gender-based significant difference in the adoption level [ $t(385) = 0,11$ ,  $p < .05$ ]. However, there is a significant gender-based difference in their colleagues' fulfillment level [ $t(385) = 1,20$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

*Title.* There is a title-based significant difference among the academicians' level of adoption to their responsibilities [ $F(2,384) = 5,144$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ]. Professors adopt their responsibilities more than assistant professors ( $\bar{X} = 29,14$ ) and associated professors adopt their responsibilities ( $\bar{X} = 30,54$ ) more than both professors and assistant professors. No significant difference was found between the academicians' titles and their level of adoption of ethical responsibilities [ $F(2,384) = 2,344$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ].

*Academic discipline.* According to the academic discipline variable, a significant difference was found in the dimension of academicians' responsibilities towards profession [ $F(2,384) = 11,385$ ;  $p < 0,05$ ]. Academicians from colleges of medicine ( $\bar{X} = 30,50$ ) adopt their responsibilities toward profession more than the academicians of engineering ( $\bar{X} = 28,30$ ) and education ( $\bar{X} = 30,30$ ). No significant difference was found related to the academic discipline variable among the academicians' opinions about their colleagues' fulfillment with the "responsibilities towards profession" [ $F(2,384) = ,551$ ;  $p > 0,05$ ].

### *Findings related to Academicians' Ethical Responsibilities towards Their "Colleagues"*

The academicians stated that their colleagues "completely" fulfill their responsibilities towards their colleagues ( $\bar{X} = 4,35$ ) and they carry out these responsibilities ( $\bar{X} = 3,82$ ) "to a great extent." Academicians most often adopt

“acknowledging the contributions of their colleagues in cooperative works” ( $\bar{X} = 4,90$ ) and “properly citing their colleagues’ ideas and findings” ( $\bar{X} = 4,82$ ). The least often adopted responsibilities are “while making evaluations, not being biased due to the influence of their super-ordinates and colleagues” ( $\bar{X} = 3,70$ ) and “being open to their colleagues’ criticisms” ( $\bar{X} = 3,93$ ). Academicians think that their colleagues most often fulfill “being respectful to the academic freedom of colleagues” ( $\bar{X} = 4,38$ ) and “being respectful to colleagues” ( $\bar{X} = 4,33$ ). On the other hand, “not being biased due to the influence of their super-ordinates and colleagues, while making evaluations” ( $\bar{X} = 3,25$ ) and “being open to their colleagues’ criticisms” ( $\bar{X} = 3,40$ ) are taught to be fulfilled relatively less often.

*Findings Related to Gender, Title and Academic Discipline Variables regarding “Ethical Responsibilities towards Colleagues”*

*Gender.* No gender-based significant difference was found among the academicians’ levels of adoption of the responsibilities [ $t(385)=1.79, p>.05$ ] and their opinions about their colleagues’ levels of fulfillment with these responsibilities [ $t(385)=3.63, p>.05$ ].

*Title.* There is not a significant difference in this dimension [ $F(2,384)=1,085; p>0.05$ ] and the level of their colleagues’ fulfillment of these responsibilities [ $F(2,384)=11,385; p>0.05$ ] in relation to the title variable.

*Academic discipline.* The academicians ( $\bar{X} = 53,23$ ) working in the colleges of medicine adopt the ethical responsibilities more than the academicians ( $\bar{X} = 49,95$ ) working in the colleges of engineering [ $F(2,384) = 7,350; p<0.01$ ].

*Findings Related to Academicians’ Ethical Responsibilities towards “Students”*

While the mean score for the academicians’ adopting their responsibilities towards students is  $\bar{X} = 4.46$ , the opinions about their colleagues’ fulfillment with these responsibilities is  $\bar{X} = 4.07$ . Most often adopted ( $\bar{X} = 4,99$ ) and most often fulfilled responsibility ( $\bar{X} = 4,58$ ) was found to be “avoiding discriminative behaviors based on religion, language, ethnicity, ideas, gender, sexual tendencies, age, or handicaps against their students.” The academicians adopt these responsibilities relatively less often: “Encouraging students to freely think and express their opinions” ( $\bar{X}=3,80$ ) and “Avoiding behaviors which may somehow be abusive for students” ( $\bar{X} = 4,88$ ). The academicians think that their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities relatively less often: “being available during office hours and if there is any change, announcing it in advance” ( $\bar{X}=3,52$ ) and “arranging the office hours in such a way as to be available for students and announce them in advance” ( $\bar{X} = 3,53$ ).

*Findings Related to Gender, Title and Academic Discipline Variables regarding “Responsibilities towards Students”*



*Gender.* No significant difference was observed according to gender among the academicians' opinions in terms of adoption levels of responsibilities towards students [ $t(385)=0.39$ ,  $p > .05$ ] and their opinions about their colleagues' levels of fulfillment [ $t(385)=1.44$ ,  $p > .05$ ].

*Title.* There is no significant difference according to title-variables among the academicians' levels of adoption [ $F_{(2,384)} = .565$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ] and their colleagues' levels of fulfillment [ $F_{(2,384)} = .491$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ].

*Academic discipline.* There is no significant difference related to the academic discipline variable among the academicians' levels of adoption [ $F_{(2,384)}=2.601$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ] and their opinions about their colleagues' levels of fulfillment [ $F_{(2,384)}=2.601$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ].

#### *Findings Related to Academicians' Ethical Responsibilities towards Their "University"*

While mean score for academicians' adoption of responsibilities towards university is  $\bar{X} = 4.37$ , the mean score for their opinions about their colleagues' fulfillment with these responsibilities is  $\bar{X} = 3.99$ . Academicians most often adopt "Protecting the resources of university, and using them effectively and efficiently" ( $\bar{X} = 4.63$ ) and "Not neglecting their responsibilities towards university to participate in any activity outside university" ( $\bar{X} = 4.59$ ). The least often adopted responsibilities in this dimension are "Informing university in advance of their intention to quit their position so as not to cause any trouble for university" ( $\bar{X} = 4.07$ ) and "Avoiding declaring their personal opinions as if they were the opinions of university" ( $\bar{X} = 4.18$ ).

Two responsibilities that academicians think that their colleagues fulfill the most are "Not neglecting their responsibilities towards university to participate in any activity outside university" ( $\bar{X} = 4.32$ ) and "being willing to accept the duties complying with their qualifications" ( $\bar{X} = 4.29$ ). On the other hand, academicians think that the least fulfilled responsibilities by their colleagues are "informing university in advance of their intention to quit their position so as not to cause any trouble for university" ( $\bar{X} = 3.70$ ) and "protecting the resources of university, and using them effectively and efficiently" ( $\bar{X} = 3.71$ ).

#### *Findings Related to the Gender, Title and Academic Discipline Variables regarding "Ethical Responsibilities towards University"*

*Gender.* There is no significant difference among the academicians' levels of adoption [ $t(385)=0.46$ ,  $p > .05$ ] and their opinions about their colleagues' levels of fulfillment [ $t(385)=1.20$ ,  $p > .05$ ] according to gender.

*Title.* There is no significant difference among the academicians' levels of adoption to their responsibilities towards university [ $F_{(2,384)} = 0.652$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ] and their opinions about their colleagues' levels of fulfillment with these responsibilities [ $F_{(2,384)}=0.293$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ] according to title.

*Academic discipline.* There is no significant difference related to the academic discipline variable among the academicians' level of adoption to their responsibilities towards university [ $F_{(2,384)} = 1.914$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ] and their opinions about their colleagues' level of fulfillment with these responsibilities [ $F_{(2,384)} = 1.694$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ].

*Findings Related to Academicians' Ethical Responsibilities towards Their "Society"*

While the academicians completely adopt their responsibilities towards society ( $\bar{X} = 4.55$ ); their colleagues' fulfillment level is "much" ( $\bar{X} = 3.92$ ) with these responsibilities. The responsibilities most often adopted by the academicians are "Being sensitive towards societal issues and protecting society's interests" ( $\bar{X} = 5.00$ ) and "Playing an active and effective role in society's economic, cultural and intellectual development" ( $\bar{X} = 4.67$ ). The academicians less often adopt these responsibilities: "avoiding behaviors that may be harmful to the credibility and stability of society" ( $\bar{X} = 4.18$ ) and "regarding serving society as a societal responsibility" ( $\bar{X} = 4.43$ ).

Academicians think that their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities the most: "being sensitive towards societal issues and protecting society's interests" ( $\bar{X} = 4, 35$ ) and "separating personal opinions from scientific findings while addressing society" ( $\bar{X} = 4, 27$ ). On the other hand, the academicians think that their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities the least: "playing an active and effective role in society's economic, cultural and intellectual development" ( $\bar{X} = 3,63$ ) and "avoiding behaviors that may be harmful to the credibility and stability of society" ( $\bar{X} = 3,64$ ).

*Findings Related to the Gender, Title and Academic Discipline Variables regarding "Ethical Responsibilities towards Society"*

*Gender.* In this dimension, there is no significant difference according to gender among the opinions of academicians' levels of adoption [ $t(385) = 0.63$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ] and their colleagues' levels of fulfillment [ $t(385) = 0.18$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ].

*Title.* There is no significant difference according to title among the academicians' levels of adoption to their responsibilities towards society [ $F_{(2,384)} = 2.258$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ] and their opinions about their colleagues' levels of fulfillment with these responsibilities [ $F_{(2,384)} = .792$ ;  $p > 0.05$ ].

*Academic discipline.* The academicians working at the colleges of medicine adopt the responsibilities towards society ( $\bar{X} = 23,28$ ) more than those working at the colleges of engineering ( $\bar{X} = 21,64$ ) [ $F_{(2,384)} = 3,393$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ].

The academicians' levels of adoption of their responsibilities towards society display some differences favoring the academicians working at the colleges of medicine as in the cases of responsibilities towards profession and colleagues. The academicians working at the colleges of medicine adopt these responsibilities more than their counterparts at the colleges of engineering and education. This, as stated

before, indicates that academicians working at the colleges of medicine attach greater importance to the concept of ethics as an internal part of their profession and they have greater awareness of their responsibilities as academicians. There is no significant difference related to the academic discipline variable among the **academicians' opinions about their adoption level to their responsibilities towards society and their colleagues' fulfillment of these responsibilities** [ $F_{(2,384)} = .417$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ].

### Discussion and Conclusion

This survey has attempted to identify ethical responsibilities of academicians in various dimensions and it highlights a very high level of agreement from the perspectives of Turkish academicians in several areas of academic responsibility. **While the academicians "completely" adopt their responsibilities towards profession, colleagues, students, university and society, they think that their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities "much."** This shows that academicians' adoption level of the academic responsibilities is above their fulfillment level. One possible reason for this will be academicians' **unawareness of their responsibilities related to this area.** In parallel with their unawareness, academicians may not have internalized some of **these responsibilities.** The dimension **"responsibilities towards students"** includes the responsibilities most adopted and fulfilled by the academicians. On the other hand, **academicians' adoption and fulfillment level of ethical responsibilities towards profession is relatively lower than the other dimensions.**

With this research, it is concluded that academicians least often adopt and fulfill the responsibility of whistleblowing any unethical practices to the authorities. In preventing unethical behavior, it is necessary to grasp the importance of whistleblowing as a virtuous behavior in academia and it should be encouraged as often as possible. This role will be undertaken by the ethical commissions or university administrations. For this purpose, whistleblowers should be protected with some precautions such as keeping their identity confidential against the threads of losing their job or being excluded by colleagues. According to Jubb (1999), whistleblowing is characterized as a **"dissenting act of public accusation against an organisation which necessitates being disloyal to that organisation."** Therefore, whistleblowers are a good example of people speaking out against illegal or unethical practices within the organizations (Alfred, 2001). Informing authorities in case of ethical violations is relatively overlooked and this may be because of the sense of pity or the fear of being subject to enmity or hatred of the accused or other colleagues (Williams, 2005, 85).

Two reasons for not appropriately and effectively punishing unethical behaviors in the field of medicine are stated to be **"systematic negligence of unethical behaviors"** and **"whistleblowers' being considered disloyal by their institutions"** by Rhodes and Strain (2004). As a result, there is a failure in the efforts to establish ethical working environments. The present study revealed that **"informing authorities on ethical violations"** is the responsibility least often adopted and thought

to be fulfilled the least often by colleagues. Hence, this finding concurs with the findings of other studies. However, as stated by Rhodes and Strain (2004), in order to create an ethical working culture, the whistleblowers should be viewed as cooperative colleagues and valuable members of the institution by the other workers and the institution itself rather than as enemies so that unethical behaviors can be prevented.

Associated professors adopt these responsibilities the most often and they are followed by professors and assistant professors. One possible reason may be that assistant professors, at the beginning of their academic career, are not fully aware of their academic ethical responsibilities towards their profession. Thus, even if they observe unethical practices, they may not be aware of their inappropriateness. For this reason, academicians in the beginning of their careers should be trained on their responsibilities and roles as academicians. Another possible reason may be that associate professors are more sensitive to ethical issues than their senior and junior colleagues and professors tend to become less sensitive about their responsibilities or inured to unethical practices as the time passes.

Academicians from colleges of medicine adopt their responsibilities toward profession more often than the academicians of engineering and education. An underlying reason for this result may be because of the importance attached to the ethics in the colleges of medicine. As stated by Williams (2005, 13), ethics has been an indispensable part of medicine since the time of Hypocrites (5th century B.C.). In other words, ethics is fundamental to medical applications. When the history of the ethical responsibilities of physicians in Turkey is considered, some documents date back to the Ottoman Era, before the foundation of Turkish Republic. It is clear that even in that era, there were some attitudes and behaviors expected from the physician in some of these documents, there are even special parts reserved only to talk about the issue of ethics in the profession. First, an incorporation of the ethical values into curriculums dates back to the 19th century. Secondly, it is clear that since 1874, medical schools of the Ottoman State had courses dealing with ethical values and this continued up to the foundation of the Republic. After the foundation of the republic, ethical responsibilities of physicians were taught in a required course called "Medical Deontology." Today, these are taught to the students of the colleges of medicine in a course called "Medical Ethics" and have contemporary content (Aydın, 2006; Terzioğlu, 1988; Sarı, 1988).

Because of the close connection between ethics and the structure of the profession, the instruction of ethics is an indispensable part of the training of a physician. Hence, it appears that ethical principles are more often adopted in the field of medicine when compared to other fields and therefore, academicians working in the field of medicine develop a better awareness of ethical responsibilities. In recent years, more importance has been attached to courses dealing with ethics in the colleges of engineering and education. Thus, in preventing unethical behaviours within the university, ethics training, professional ethics, science philosophy and research methods should be a part of the curriculum in all graduate programs and disciplines.

The “Responsibilities towards profession” dimension includes the least adopted responsibilities and also those least fulfilled by the colleagues. Birch, Elliott and Trankel (1999), on the other hand, in their study dealing with “a portrait of an ethical professor,” defined the academicians’ responsibilities towards the university as a gray area as the academicians were found to be undecided in most of their responses to the behaviors presented in this category. Based on this definition, a gray area in the present study can be viewed as their responsibilities towards profession and their opinions about their colleagues’ level of fulfillment with these responsibilities.

Colleges of medicine academicians adopt ethical responsibilities more than their counterparts working in other colleges. This difference may be a result of the fact that deontology and ethics courses have been an integral part of the curriculums of medical colleges for a long time and that the professional responsibility perception and ethical awareness of the members of this profession are more developed. Moreover, articles 37, 38, 39 and 40 of Medical Deontology Law regulating the ethical responsibilities in the interactions among the professionals state that “physicians should conduct good professional relations among themselves and ethically support each other.” If there are profession-related conflicts among physicians, they first try to find solutions on their own; if they cannot solve these conflicts, then they carry the situation to their association. Consequently, academicians of medicine attach a greater importance to the concept of ethics as an internal part of their profession and they have greater awareness of their responsibilities as academicians

Academicians think that their colleagues fulfill these responsibilities relatively less often: “being available in the office hours and if there is any change, announcing it in advance” and “arranging the office hours in such a way as to be available for students and announcing them in advance.” Our finding supports the findings of Mason et al. (1990), reporting “not showing up for students’ appointments” as one of the most frequently occurring issues among marketing academicians.” The responsibilities towards students are both most adopted and fulfilled by colleagues. That is, responsibilities towards students are the areas to which the academicians are the most sensitive to in terms of their responsibilities.

Academicians most often adopt “protecting the resources of university, and using them effectively and efficiently” and “not neglecting their responsibilities towards university to participate in any activity outside university.” These findings of the present study are similar to those of Lewellyn (1996), who investigated the ethical attitudes of the academicians working in the field of “information systems.” Seventy-seven percent of the participants of that study found that “neglecting university responsibilities due to outside employment” unethical ranging from moderately unethical to extremely unethical.

Two responsibilities that academicians think that their colleagues fulfill the most often are “not neglecting their responsibilities towards university to participate in any activity outside university” and “being willing to accept the duties complying with their qualifications.” Consistent with this finding, Birch et al. (1999) found that half of the participants working at Montana University think that “avoidance of

committee responsibilities" is unethical and the other half is divided into two as those who are undecided and those who find it ethical.

In our research, academicians think that "informing university in advance of their intention to quit their position so as not to cause any trouble for university" and "protecting the resources of university, and using them effectively and efficiently" are relatively neglected responsibilities. This finding is in line with the findings of Mason et al. (1990), reporting "using university resources in one's consulting practice without paying for that use" is one of the most severe occurrences among faculty practices. This study provides a comparison between three different disciplines representing the views of academicians from social, medical and life sciences. Based on this study, further research may be conducted focusing on the other disciplines of academia such as law, political sciences, and dentistry.

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### **Türk Üniversitelerinde Akademik Etik: Tıp, Mühendislik ve Eğitim Fakültelerindeki Akademisyenlerin Algıları**

#### **Atıf:**

Aydın, İ., Demirkasımoğlu, N., & Alkın, S. (2012). Academic ethics in turkish universities: Perceptions of academicians from engineering, medicine and education colleges. *Eğitim Arastırmaları-Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 49,41-60.

#### **(Özet)**

*Problem Durumu:* Öğretim üyeleri, bilim insanları olarak, bilginin araştırılması ve özgürce açıklanmasına, öğrencilerin yetiştirilmesine, toplumun katılımlarına ve kamu hizmetlerine özel bilgi ve becerileri ile profesyoneller olarak katkıda bulunurlar. Toplumların ve insanlığın gelişmesine çok önemli katkılarda bulunan üniversitelerin işlevlerinin gelişmesinde öğretim üyelerinin akademik etik değerleri son derece önemli bir yer tutmaktadır. Son yıllarda çokça gündeme gelen etik konusu kapsamında, mesleki etik kodların geliştirilmesine ilişkin çalışmalar bir hayli ilgi odağı olmuştur. Hemen hemen tüm meslekler, meslek üyelerinin davranışlarını kontrol edecek ya da davranışlarına rehberlik yapacak etik kodlar geliştirmenin gerekli olduğunu kabul ederler. Bu araştırmanın problemi, Türk kamu üniversitelerinin tıp, mühendislik ve eğitim fakültelerinde öğretim üyelerinin (profesör, doçent ve yardımcı doçent) etik ilkeleri benimseme ve meslektaşlarının bu ilkelere uyma durumuna ilişkin görüşlerinin ne olduğudur. Bu çalışmada, öncelikle öğretim üyelerinin akademik etik yükümlülüklerinin neler olması gerektiğine yönelik bir çerçeve çizilmiş, sağlık, fen ve sosyal bilimler alanlarında görev yapan öğretim üyelerinin akademik etik ilkelere ilişkin görüşleri alanlar arası bir karşılaştırmaya olanak sağlayacak biçimde incelenmiştir.

*Araştırmanın Amacı:* Bu çalışmada öğretim üyelerinin; mesleğe, meslektaşlara, öğrencilere, topluma ve üniversiteye karşı akademik etik yükümlülükleri benimseme ve meslektaşlarının bu yükümlülükleri uyma düzeylerine ilişkin görüşlerinin akademik unvan (profesör, doçent, yardımcı doçent), cinsiyet ve alan (tıp, mühendislik, eğitim fakülteleri) değişkenleri bakımından incelenmesi amaçlanmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Temel amacı, Türkiye’de kamu üniversitelerinde görev yapan akademisyenlerin akademik etik ilkeleri benimseme ve bu ilkelere meslektaşlarının uyma düzeylerine ilişkin görüşlerinin belirlenmesi olan bu araştırma, geçmişte ya da halen var olan bir durumu olduğu şekliyle betimlemek amacıyla olduğundan tarama modelindedir. Araştırmanın hedef evrenini Türkiye’deki üniversitelerin tıp, mühendislik ve eğitim fakültelerinde görev yapmakta olan öğretim üyeleri (profesör, doçent ve yardımcı doçent) oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada 3 alt evren kullanılmış, araştırmanın örnekleme 381 öğretim üyesi alınmıştır. Araştırmada örnekleme alınan iller ve üniversiteler, Devlet Planlama Teşkilatı ve Türkiye İstatistik Enstitüsü tarafından oluşturulan “İstatistiki Bölge Birimleri Sınıflandırması (NUTS)” esas alınarak seçilmiştir. Araştırmada her alt evrenin evrende temsil edilebilmesi için öncelikle 12 bölgenin her birisinde tıp, mühendislik ve eğitim fakültesi bulunan

üniversiteler arasından bir üniversite, o bölgeyi temsil etmek üzere basit yansız örnekleme biçiminde seçilmiştir. Araştırmanın verileri, “Kamu Üniversitelerinde Görev Yapan Akademisyenlerin Akademik Etik İlkeleri Benimseme ve Meslektaşlarının Bu İlkelere Uyma Düzeyleri Ölçeği” ile toplanmıştır.

Araştırmaya Tıp Fakültelerinden 236, Mühendislik Fakültelerinden 91, Eğitim Fakültelerinden 60 olmak üzere 387 öğretim üyesi katılmıştır. Öğretim üyelerinin 162’si Profesör, 80’i Doçent ve 145’i Yardımcı Doçentlerden oluşmuştur. Araştırmanın verileri, “Kamu Üniversitelerinde Görev Yapan Akademisyenlerin Akademik Etik İlkeleri Benimseme ve Meslektaşlarının Bu İlkelere Uyma Düzeyleri Anketi” ile toplanmıştır. Anketin geliştirilebilmesi için, 15 ülkedeki 50 üniversitenin yayımladığı akademik etik ilkelerden yararlanılmıştır. Ankette bulunan ifadelere verilen yanıtlar, akademisyenlerin akademik etik ilkeleri benimseme sütununda “Hiç Benimsemiyorum” seçeneğinden “Tam Benimsiyorum”, seçeneğine; meslektaşlarının uyma düzeyine ilişkin görüşleri sütununda “Hiç Uymuyorlar” seçeneğinden “Tam Uyuyorlar” seçeneğine 1’den 5’e doğru sayısal değerler verilerek puanlanmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Öğretim üyeleri akademik etik yükümlülükleri mesleğe, meslektaşlara, öğrenciye, üniversiteye ve topluma karşı yükümlülükleri boyutlarında “tam” benimserken, meslektaşlarının bu yükümlülükleri “çok” uyduklarını düşünmektedir. Akademisyenlerin akademik etik ilkeler uyma düzeyi, bu ilkeleri benimseme düzeyinin altında kalmaktadır. Akademisyenler, “öğrencilere karşı yükümlülükleri” ilk sırada, “mesleğe karşı yükümlülükleri” ise son sırada benimserken, meslektaşlarının “öğrencilere karşı yükümlülükleri” ilk sırada, “mesleğe karşı yükümlülükleri” ise son sırada yerine getirdiğini düşünmektedir. “Öğrencilere karşı yükümlülükler” boyutundaki ilkeler, akademisyenler tarafından hem en fazla benimsenen hem de meslektaşlarının en fazla uyduğu düşünülen boyuttur. Diğer yandan, “mesleğe karşı yükümlülükler” boyutunda yer alan ilkeler, görece olarak akademisyenlerin daha az benimsedikleri ve meslektaşlarının daha az uyduklarını düşündükleri ilkelerden oluşmaktadır.

Akademisyenlerin görüşleri cinsiyet değişkenine göre yalnızca, “mesleğe karşı etik ilkeler” alt boyutunda anlamlı farklılık göstermektedir. Buna göre, kadın akademisyenler erkek akademisyenlere göre meslektaşlarının “mesleğe karşı etik ilkeler” daha fazla uyduklarını düşünmektedir. Bunun dışındaki boyutlarda cinsiyet değişkenine göre anlamlı farklılık bulunmamaktadır. Mesleğe karşı etik yükümlülükleri, profesörler, yardımcı doçentlere; doçentler ise profesörlere ve yardımcı doçentlere göre daha fazla benimsemektedir. Tıp fakültelerinde görev yapan akademisyenler, mühendislik ve eğitim fakültelerinde görev yapan akademisyenlerden “mesleğe karşı yükümlülüklerini” daha fazla benimsemektedir.

Akademisyenlerin akademik etik ilkeleri benimseme düzeyleri, “mesleğe” ve “meslektaşlara karşı yükümlülükler” boyutlarında olduğu gibi, topluma karşı yükümlülükler boyutunda da alan değişkenine göre tıp fakültelerinde görev yapan akademisyenler lehine farklılaşmaktadır. Tıp fakültelerinde görev yapan akademisyenler, sözü edilen boyutlardaki etik ilkeleri, eğitim ve mühendislik fakültelerinde görev yapan akademisyenlerden daha fazla benimsemektedir.

*Araştırmanın Sonuçları ve Önerileri:* Araştırmada, akademisyenlerin etik ihlalleri yetkili makamlara bildirme ilkesini benimseme ve meslektaşlarının uyma düzeyinin mesleğe karşı etik yükümlülükler arasında son sırada yer aldığı sonucuna ulaşılmıştır. Etik dışı davranışın yetkili makamlara bildirilmesinin etik dışı davranışın önlenmesindeki öneminin ve erdemli bir davranış olduğunun akademisyenlere kavratılması ve bu davranışın mümkün olduğunca teşvik edilmesi gerekmektedir. Bu rol, üniversitelerin etik kurullar ya da üniversite yönetimlerince üstelenilebilir. Üniversitelerin lisans programlarında tüm disiplinlerde etik eğitimleri ve mesleki etik kodlar, eğitim programının bir parçası olmalıdır. Çünkü, etik davranış sadece akademinin değil, tüm mesleklerin bir gerekliliğidir. Akademik etik, aslında meslek etiğinin akademisyenlerin iş çevresinde uymaları gereken toplumsal ve bilimsel sorumlulukları kapsamaktadır. Etik davranışın eğitimlerle öğretilmesi ve içselleştirilmesi her zaman mümkün olmasa da eğitim, etik değer ve ilkelerin önemine karşı farkındalık ve duyarlılık geliştirilmesinde yararlı olacaktır. Bunun yanında hizmete yeni başlayan akademisyenlerin de, bir akademisyen olarak, “mesleğe”, “meslektaşlara”, “öğrenciye”, “üniversiteye” ve “topluma” karşı yükümlülüklerini ve rollerini, ilgili mevzuat ve düzenlemeleri de içeren etik eğitimlerinin verilmesi yerinde olacaktır.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Akademik etik, akademik yükümlülük, akademik etik kodlar